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# **Rural Tourism as a Development Strategy**

## ***Case Studies from Chile***

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## ABSTRACT

In the last ten years Chilean governments have implemented various policies aimed at rural poverty alleviation, focusing initially only on agricultural development and more recently also on non-agricultural development, promoting activities such as rural tourism. While rural tourism has been developed in Chile to some extent, there is still a lack of empirical research on its development and impacts. The aim in doing this study was to overcome this lack of research and guide strategies for rural tourism development initiatives in Chile. To achieve this, a multiple case study involving two communities was undertaken to identify ways in which smallholder farming households can be assisted in diversifying their livelihoods into rural tourism. Data were collected using semi-structured interviews and participatory methods. These data were then analysed using qualitative methods.

Households which have diversified into rural tourism are very positive about it. In economic terms rural tourism has allowed them to improve their housing conditions and increase spending on their children's education, and has provided work for women and young people. Rural tourism has also increased women's self-esteem and, importantly, has led people to place a higher value on their cultural traditions. It has also increased environmental awareness and fostered native tree planting at the household level. Rural tourism has also had some negative consequences, such as loss of family privacy, increased noise and increased solid waste problems.

The main findings of this research suggest that there are key factors for successful rural tourism development. Therefore, for rural tourism to become a viable strategy for smallholder farming households assistance needs to take into account such things as provision of credit, technical assistance in setting up a rural tourism product to meet tourists' expectations, building stakeholders' capacity in rural tourism and business management, as well as assistance in establishing and managing an association of rural tourism providers. Changes to regulatory frameworks are also required to enable the setting up of rural tourism ventures. Effective cooperation and coordination between tourism operators and rural tourism providers, as well as cultural impact management and solid waste management, are also needed for successful rural tourism development.

**Key words:** *rural tourism, rural development, livelihood diversification, Chile.*

## RESÚMEN

El Turismo Rural se ha desarrollado en Chile desde hace algunos años, sin embargo aún existe escasa investigación disponible en este tema. Este estudio tiene como objetivo propiciar iniciativas para el desarrollo del Turismo Rural en Chile. Por esto, el objetivo principal de esta investigación es identificar el cómo familias campesinas pueden ser ayudadas en el proceso de diversificación del rubro agrícola en Turismo Rural.

Este estudio muestra que el Turismo Rural ha hecho aportes al ingreso familiar permitiéndoles mejorar sus condiciones de vivienda e invertir en la educación de sus hijos. También ha generado empleo, principalmente para mujeres y jóvenes del hogar. Además, ha permitido cambios socioculturales de importancia: ha aumentado la autoestima de las mujeres que participan en la actividad, así como también la valoración de las culturas tanto campesina como indígena de las zonas visitadas. Además, el Turismo Rural ha fomentado la conciencia ambiental y la plantación de árboles nativos. Sin embargo, también ha tenido impactos negativos, como la pérdida de espacios familiares, aumento de la basura y ruido durante los meses de verano en aquellas zonas donde se llevó a efecto la investigación.

Los resultados de esta investigación apuntan a que el Turismo Rural tiene el potencial de convertirse en una viable estrategia de desarrollo para familias campesinas de Chile. Para que esto ocurra, las familias deben ser asistidas a través de: provisión de crédito; asistencia técnica para la creación de un producto turístico de calidad; mejora de las habilidades de los involucrados en aspectos relativos al turismo rural y administración de pequeñas y medianas empresas y asistencia en la formación de asociaciones de turismo rural que funcionen adecuadamente. También deben existir cambios a la legislación existente referente a permisos y licencias y la creación de redes de contactos entre operadores turísticos y familias que ofrecen turismo rural. Finalmente, es importante incorporar aspectos como manejo adecuado de la basura e impacto cultural y social, ya que son también condiciones claves para que el desarrollo del Turismo Rural se realice de una manera sostenible.

**Palabras claves:** Desarrollo Rural, Turismo Rural, Diversificación agrícola y Chile.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

**AMCT:** National Association of Tourism Councils (*Asociación Nacional de Municipalidades Turísticas de Chile*)

**CONAF:** National Corporation of Forestry (*Corporación Nacional Forestal*)

**CORFO:** Productivity Promotion Corporation (*Corporación de Fomento a la Producción*)

**FAO:** Food and Agriculture Organisation

**FIA:** Foundation for Agrarian Innovation (*Fundación para la Innovación Agraria*)

**FAT:** Technical Assistance Fund (*Fondo de Asistencia Técnica*)

**INDAP:** National Institute of Agricultural Development (*Instituto Nacional de Desarrollo Agropecuario*)

**INE:** National Institute of Statistics (*Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas*)

**MIDEPLAN:** Ministry of planning and development (*Ministerio de Planificación y Desarrollo*)

**PLADECO:** District development Plan (*Plan de Desarrollo Comunal*)

**PROFO:** Association projects for promoting productivity (*Proyecto Asociativo de Fomento*)

**PTR:** National Rural Tourism programme (*Programa Nacional de Turismo Rural*)

**SERCOTEC:** Technical Assistance Service (*Servicio de Asistencia Técnica*)

**SERNATUR:** National Service of Tourism (*Servicio Nacional de Turismo*)

**WTO:** World Tourism Organisation

**WTTC:** World Travel and Tourism Council

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